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For Immediate Release
September 30, 2002

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**SWIFT ADMINISTRATION CELEBRATES
THE PARTNERSHIP TO PROTECT MT. TOM**

HOLYOKE – Bob Durand, Secretary of Environmental Affairs, today joined with U.S. Representative John W. Olver, Holyoke Mayor Michael Sullivan, state legislators and the non-profit partners, The Trustees of Reservations and The Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Holyoke, in celebration of the acquisition of the former Mt. Tom ski area for recreational and conservation purposes.

Five partners joined to purchase the 381-acre property earlier this year, bringing a multi-year effort to a successful close. In addition to TTOR and the Boys and Girls Club, the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA), the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management (DEM), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) participated in the purchase.

DEM purchased the largest parcel – 144.7 acres abutting the existing Mt. Tom State Reservation – for \$1.3 million. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service allocated \$1.1 million for 140.8 acres on the upper slopes of the mountain and will manage its parcel as part of the Silvio Conte National Wildlife Refuge. TTOR purchased 73.5 acres on the hill known as Little Tom for \$300,000, and will manage the property for its scenic, recreational and ecological value.

Also, a 21.7-acre parcel at the base of the mountain, including the base lodge, wave pool and other improvements, will be purchased by the Boys and Girls Club for \$300,000 for future use as a

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summer camp and other outdoors-related programming, including use of the trails and natural amenities owned by the conservation groups. The club intends to develop the property for active four-season recreation, camping, and environmental educational activities for youth from Holyoke and surrounding communities.

The two non-profits were asked to help EOEa, DEM and USFWS to provide the necessary funding to complete the deal, and both responded enthusiastically. In order to complete the purchase within the short timeframe, both nonprofits are borrowing funds and will need to mount substantial fundraising campaigns to repay the loans and to fund capital improvements and operating costs.

Under the terms of the sale, the owners of Mt. Tom Ski Area will honor their contract to Mt. Tom Rock, Inc, a mining company from Ludlow, to mine within an existing quarry footprint. The quarry site is to be transferred to the state at the end of the quarrying period at no additional cost and free of any contamination. Quarrying will end in 2012, or sooner if quarrying operations are terminated, or as soon as two million tons have been removed.

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WHAT THE PRINCIPALS SAID ABOUT PRESERVING MT. TOM

“Of the 140,000 acres of open space we have been able to protect in just more than three years, this acquisition represents one of the most important ones we have been able to accomplish because of its potential to bring urban kids in contact with the natural world,” said **Bob Durand, Secretary of Environmental Affairs**. “The relationships we forged to get this deal done are representative of the kinds of partnerships that have kept the Swift Administration on this rapid land protection pace.”

“This deal has been a long time in coming and I congratulate everyone involved on their perseverance to protect Mount Tom for future generations,” said **U.S. Rep. John W. Olver**. “I have supported land acquisition funds for the Conte Refuge with the hope that they would be able to join with state and local players to preserve our precious environmental resources. This deal has realized that hope and shown beyond a doubt that support for land protection in the Pioneer Valley is deep and widespread. I look forward to helping with similar deals that aim to protect additional land along the Mount Tom and Mount Holyoke range.”

“We always stress the three Ps - people, partnerships and promoting our natural resources,” said **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Regional Director Dr. Mamie Parker**. “This project exemplifies the three Ps. Partnership was the key to protect the great wildlife habitat on Mt. Tom for the people of Holyoke, Massachusetts and the nation.”

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“The Mt. Tom acquisition is fine example of what can be accomplished when people work together,” said Department of **Environmental Management Commissioner Peter C. Webber**. “I am delighted that the state and its partners banded together for the preservation of such a unique landmark. This project will benefit the Commonwealth and its residents for years to come.”

“For the past several years many people have been working very hard to make this day a reality,” said **state Sen. Michael R. Knapik**. “I would like to thank Governor Swift, Secretary Durand and Commissioner Webber for their leadership and for their demonstrated stewardship to this important natural resource at Mt. Tom. This coalition of government agencies, community activists, and non-profit partners can be most proud of the never quit attitude we have brought to this effort.”

“This is a great day for the City of Holyoke and for all of those who will be able to take advantage of the preservation of this outstanding natural resource,” said **state Rep. Michael F. Kane**. “It is particularly important for the children who will be able to come here for recreation and hands-on learning that they just would not be able to get anywhere else.”

“This is a milestone in preserving one of Holyoke's greatest natural resources,” said **Holyoke Mayor Michael Sullivan**. “Mt. Tom has always been a symbol of strength for this community.”

“Protecting Mt. Tom is a significant victory for one and all,” said **Andy Kendall, Executive Director, The Trustees of Reservations**. “The successful completion of this complex project highlights the value of creating partnerships whose combined efforts are beyond the capacity of any one agency or organization. The proximity of Mt. Tom to Holyoke and our ability to partner with the Holyoke Boys and Girls Club allows us to extend our conservation work to urban audiences. And the scenic, historic, and ecological resources of Mt. Tom are priceless to everyone who enjoys the Massachusetts landscape.”

“The Boys and Girls Club of Greater Holyoke look forward to many years of cooperative activities with The Trustees of Reservations, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as we introduce urban youth to the environment for educational and recreational purposes,” said **Bruce Thompson, President of the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Holyoke**.

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